THE Reconstructionist

Vol. X. October 6, 1944 Tishre 19, 5705 No. 11

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INTRODUCTION TO "SABBATH SERVICES FOR THE MODERN SYNAGOGUE"

RECONSTRUCTIONISM AS BOTH A CHALLENGING AND UNIFYING INFLUENCE
By Mordecai M. Kaplan

BOOK NOTES *By Robert Gordis*

REALITIES AND VALUES

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EDITORIALS

THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONFERENCE

THE second session of the American Jewish Conference has been called for December 3-5 in Pittsburgh. Since its initial metings a year ago, the Conference has continued to function through its various committees under the general aegis of the Interim Committe. Now the 498 Conference delegates, originally elected by the communities and appointed by the constituent national organizations, have been summoned to a second plenary session.

The year just concluded has witnessed stirring and momentous events, none of which, unhappily, has served at all to lesson the tragic seriousness of the problems to which the Conference addressed itself in its first convocation. If anything, conditions have worsened. The White Paper policy regarding Palestine has worked even greater hardships upon those requiring immigration certificates; and the Nazis have had additional time in which to decimate the Jews. To be sure, the dramatic advance of the victorious Allied armies has liberated many communities of Jews; but liberation has not guaranteed their rights or status.

It might appear, therefore, that a second meeting of the Conference is needed. If the situation of Jewry required the original convening of the Conference, it surely requires it now. Yet we venture to question whether the leaders of the Conference are altogether correct in assuming that a second session, *similar in its scope and function to the first,* is calculated to advance to any considerable degree the causes to which it is dedicated.

When the Conference adjourned in September 1943, it had passed a number of resolutions dealing with Palestine, postwar Jewish rights, and rescue. Those resolutions were widely publicized; but the question then arose: Did the Conference thereby completely fulfill its function, or was the Conference expected, through its Interim Committee, to press for the implementation of those resolutions? Was the Conference, in other words, to be regarded as merely an *opinion* group, or was it to be also an *action* group? Let us examine the implications of these questions.

If the Conference was an opinion group, what further need was there for the various committees and for another meeting? The consensus of American Jewry was registered. It was on the record, and those national organizations concerned with one phase or another of the view-

point expressed could carry on their work as before, fortified now by the virtually unanimous backing of a vast constituency. If, on the other hand, the Conference was an action group, then why should its efficacy have been weakened by the continued functioning of those national organizations whose work serves merely to duplicate the work of the Conference? To put it plainly: either the Conference should have met once and once only to obtain for certain national organizations a vote of confidence from the American Jewish community, or the Conference should have been granted authority to act in the place of the hitherto overlapping and competing organizations. But for every national organization to go along as though there were no Conference, and for the Conference to proceed as though there were no national organizations is to add to the confusion.

We were careful to state, above, that this would be the case if the second meeting of the Conference were to be "similar in its scope and function" to the first. By that we meant to imply that the American Jewish Conference has a vital function to perform in this, its forthcoming second meeting. It is a function in which, at present, its spokesmen have indicated no interest, but one in which we are certain many of the communities throughout the land would be deeply interested. That function would be to call into being an American Jewish Assembly dedicated to the creative survival of Jewish life in America. The term "Assembly" is used advisedly, for that bears the connotation of permanence, a connotation clearly perceived by the American Jewish Committee which opposed the use of the term when it was originally applied to the Conference. Such an Assembly would serve as a sort of constitutional convention for American Jewry, to establish a more perfect union, an intelligent, carefully planned and efficient framework for the Jewish community of the United States. Perhaps not all the delegates would favor this move. This should not deter those who are concerned with the problem from forging ahead.

There is good reason to believe that American Jews have been disappointed in the American Jewish Conference thus far. This is no reflection *upon* anyone; it is merely a reflection *of* a situation. Nevertheless, American Jews had high hopes for the Conference, hopes which perhaps were not clearly articulated. We believe that, if they had been formulated clearly, they would have involved, among other things, the reorganization of American Jewish community life geared to the positive values of Judaism. We call upon the delegates to the forthcoming sessions in Pittsburgh to give voice to those purposes and to work for their realization.

ADVICE TO THE WELFARE FUNDS

THIS is the season when Welfare Funds make their New Year resolutions—and their allocations. It is therefore the time when attention should be directed towards the basis upon which these public funds are disbursed.

Unfortunately, a tendency has grown up to restrict the general purposes of Jewish life which these monies should assist to the confines of "overseas relief" and "combating anti-Semitism." To satisfy even these demands is a tall order. No one will deny the importance of both these objectives and the fact that they demand support. On the other hand, it is a fatal mistake to imagine that they exhaust the needs and tasks which confront contemporary Jewry, and on this assumption to curtail the financial assistance which should be forthcoming for other equally vital purposes.

Perhaps the gravest implication of the current approach is that *cultural* activities are a luxury or of only secondary importance if any. This narrow view is all the more dangerous because it misconstrues the true nature even of "overseas relief" and "combating anti-Semitism" themselves. For what should properly be covered by the former is not only material succor but the resuscitation of Jewish energy, creativity and, in a word, civilization. More is implied than the rehabilitation of Jews; equally vital is the rehabilitation of Judaism, in its widest cultural sense. By the same token, the combating of anti-Semitism entails far more than the financing merely of good-will campaigns, the promotion of inter-faith brotherhood, and the exchange of pulpits for "mutual understanding." What has to be defended is not merely the civic status and rights of Jews but the values of Judaism. In other words, the promotion of that which alone validates the distinctiveness of Jews is and must be an integral part of any contemporary Jewish program.

This can be accomplished only if those upon whom rests the responsibility for disbursing public funds are prepared to take the long and sound view. In practice, this means that Welfare Funds must make provision for the maintenance and support of Jewish cultural agencies, and must give up the idea that the pursuit of Jewish scholarship, art, and research are luxuries which can come later.

In bygone days, it would have been unnecessary to point this out, for the formal structure of Jewish communities usually included recognized agencies for scholarly and cultural purposes. Today, however, when so many aspects of communal life depend, from the practical point of view, on the temperament and outlook of Welfare Funds and Community Councils, it is imperative that these institutions approach the problem with clear vision. They must not confuse the realistic with the materialistic. Realism demands the satisfaction of Jewish spiritual and cultural needs.

OBTAINING RIGHTS FOR EUROPEAN JEWS

THE text of the Allied-Rumanian armistice agreement, as reported on September 14, provides that the Rumanian Government shall abolish all racial discriminatory legislation. Since this provision is found in an armistice agreement, as distinguished from a peace treaty, it is safe to assume that its terms will be observed; for, during the period of armistice, Rumanian sovereignty will be limited in many ways, and the Government will need to take orders from the victor nations. But what will be the situation after the peace treaty has been signed? Rumania and Poland were guilty of many serious anti-Semitic practices long before Hitler came into power. How will they, as well as Germany and other enemy countries, be brought into the democratic sphere in fact and deed, as well as in word? This is one of the root problems of post-war reconstruction and, from the Jewish standpoint, perhaps the problem of central importance.

It has been suggested by responsible persons, particularly by the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, headed by James T. Shotwell, that a United Nations Conference on Human Rights be called, on the initiative of the United States. The Conference should consist of government delegates from each nation and representatives of certain private organizations. The primary purpose of the Conference should be to establish a permanent United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Provision should be made for consideration of an International Bill of Rights and means of insuring its obser-

vance. The proposal contemplates the immediate adoption of the Bill of Rights, "which would have to be quite general in its terms"; its elaboration and broadening would take place in the future. The liberty of individuals would no longer be a matter only for the law of each nation; there will need to be a legal organization to apply and enforce the individual's civil rights.

Just what is meant by "application" and "enforcement" is not altogether clear; for the Statement of the Shotwell Commission says: "Except for consultative contact with the Commission on Human Rights and such increasing pressures as would result from continual international conference, *each nation would naturally reserve the right to construe these freedoms in accordance with its own traditions and needs.*" As an illustration, the Statement offers the following: "We could no more have Russia or China tell us how much religious freedom to permit Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, than we could tell those countries what degree freedom of religion should have there. Each of these freedoms is to a large extent relative to a particular social and political context." In another part of the Statement the Commission says: "With the aid and stimulation of the Human Rights Commission, *enforcement of standards will rest with the nations themselves in accordance with their own traditions and legal systems.*" The Commission will, however, have the right to investigate complaints filed by individuals; and, under certain conditions, representatives of the Commission will have the right to provide legal aid to aggrieved persons *before national tribunals.*

If a bill of rights, written in general terms, is to be left for interpretation and enforcement with the individual nations, who are to be guided by their own needs, traditions, and political and social context, what great benefits can one expect from its promulgation? If Poland will want to establish "Jew-benches" in its schools and universities, or prohibit *shehitah,* who will be able to say that such conduct is not similar to the American prohibition of polygamy as it affects Mormons, or segregation in transportation or education as it affects Negroes? Are the rights of Jews of Poland or Rumania to be left to the Polish or Rumanian judgment of the needs and traditions of their people?

The ultimate power of the proposed Commission on Human Rights will be to furnish legal aid to affected individuals before the national courts. This will reduce the Commission to a sort of American Civil Liberties Union or National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Its lawyers and other agents will be as popular before the courts of Poland or Rumania, for example, as is Arthur Garfield Hays in Alabama or South Carolina. An International Bill of Rights without effective machinery for its enforcement will have, at the most, propaganda value.

Another point should be made: as long as the United States countenances discrimination, it cannot be expected that it will become a signatory to a document which will guarantee democracy in other parts of the world. As long as Negro benches in trains and buses are legal in the United States, as long as segregation along racial lines is legal in American schools and universities, as long as written or unwritten *numerus clausus* provisions guide American universities in the admission of Jewish students, America cannot be expected to fight against "Jew-benches" in Poland or the *numerus clausus* in European universities.

We need full American democracy at home before we can expect our Government to undertake its export. "One hand washes the other." The Jew in America must fight for complete, "total" democracy at home if he wants to be sure that

the European Jews will enjoy freedom. He must fight on all fronts. He must fight against every form of discrimination wherever he finds it. We live in One World: the denial of rights to Negroes in Tennessee affects the Jews of Warsaw or Cracow.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE CENTRAL LOCATION INDEX has been organized as a clearing house of information to locate persons abroad who are now being sought by relatives and friends in this country. Hundreds of thousands of names are on its list of men and women with whom Americans are seeking to re-establish contact. In this agency seven important organizations participate: The American Committee for Christian Refugees, the American Friends Service Committee, The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the International Migration Service, The National Council of Jewish Women and the National Refugee Service. By the cooperative use of their respective facilities through the Central Location Index, these organizations greatly enhance the effectiveness of their humanitarian efforts. Our readers who wish to locate friends or relatives abroad are asked to apply to the affiliated organization which is most accessible to them. They can now do so with the full assurance that the ampler resources of the Central Location Index will be put at their disposal by any organization to which they apply.

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OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. Harry Friedenwald on his 80th birthday. At eighty, one is entitled to reminisce. And, if Dr. Friedenwald does so, his memories will include almost a complete history of Zionism. Reared in the love of Palestine by a father who was one of the pre-Herzlian *Hoveve Zion,* he has shown an unflagging devotion to the cause from its early feeble beginnings in America to the present day, when the Z.O.A. has the largest membership of any American Jewish organization. And he has not only witnessed that growth but has helped to nurture it with wholehearted devotion. His Zionism moreover is the kind advocated by Reconstructionism, one that is rooted in Jewish religion and is no less concerned with Zionism's contribution to the Disapora than with its contribution to the Yishuv. Besides his Zionist activities he can look back wth satisfaction on a distinguished professional career as a leading ophthalmologist, to contributions to Jewish science through researches in the history of Jewish medicine and to notable services rendered in the cause of the synagogue, Jewish education and Jewish communal life in general. Personalities of such breadth and depth of Jewish interest are rare in these days among Jewish laymen. Dr. Friedenwald reminds one of the Jewish physicians and scholars of medieval Spain who combined devotion to the science and art of healing with devotion to the Torah, Hebrew letters and the land and people of Israel.

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TWO RECENT ITEMS OF NEWS illustrate the right and the wrong approach to the problem of interfaith relations. Speaking at the fifth annual meeting of the Conference on Science Philosophy and Religion, Clyde Kluckhorn, Professor of Anthropology at Peabody Museum, Cambridge, Mass., criticized the self-righteousness of the churches. "All Christian churches," he said, "share with Nazism and communism one idea, that each one has the answer to right what is wrong with the world. Each wants to

make the world over on its own terms. . . . *The existing religions ought to admit there is no single way of life adequate to the needs of all human beings.*" That is the right approach. The wrong approach comes out in a statement made by Dr. Daniel L. Marsh, president of Boston University. The occasion was an interfaith service in Temple Sinai, of which Beryl D. Cohon is rabbi. At this service two candelabra presented by Alfred H. Avery, a prominent Methodist layman, were dedicated. Dr. Marsh said that he "expected to live to see the day when Jews would become a Protestant group." For that wrong approach, Jewish appeasers of intolerance, like Rabbi Cohon and members of the American Council for Judaism, are largely responsible. They talk constantly of the Judeo-Christian tradition. They sedulously avoid any implication that Christianity, as a way of life is inadequate for Jews, however, adequate it may be for Christians. It is therefore most natural that Christians should see in the religion of these Jews nothing but a Judeo-Christianity, which can easily find shelter within the Protestant Church.

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THE BRITISH HAVE announced the formation of a Jewish Brigade. At last, after five years, the distinctive contribution of the Palestinian Jews to the war effort has been recognized. The full significance of the Brigade cannot yet be evaluated; but already there are interesting sidelights on the announcement of its formation. Mr. Lessing Rosenwald has protested against the name "Jewish." It should be, he says, the Zionist Brigade; there is no Jewish flag, only a Zionist flag. Mr. Rosenwald may be joining the Revisionist groups any day now, for they have been popularizing the distinction between Jews and Hebrews, splitting our people into two. Strange bedfellows, indeed!

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THE JEWISH SOLDIERS AT Headquarters Base F, in the Pacific Theatre of War, have raised $2,000 for the United Jewish Appeal. After a talk given by their Chaplain, Dudley Weinberg, the men spontaneously set the quota, and then went out and filled it. "They are soldiers and they are Jews," says the Chaplain, "it is as simple as that." Simple? We doubt it. It is highly complex—and we must not forget that the privates get $50 a month. In this "simple" act is interwoven the experience of suffering, the days spent in loneliness and nostalgia, the new contacts with the non-Jews at close hand, the awareness of a war fought for decency and justice. Not so simple.

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THE REPORTS OF SERVICES held on Rosh Hashanah in the capital cities of Europe, Moscow, London, Rome and Paris, make thrilling reading. Underlying them all, however, is a note of great sadness. In every case the *kaddish* prayer brought forth wails and cries from bereaved men, women and children. The dispatches were undoubtedly right in reporting that not one worshiper in any of the synagogues was without his dead. While reading these descriptions, one comes to realize that we Jews share more than a common belief in God. We share common emotions, common hopes and common woes. We are *one* people. Let us hope that we shall not lapse into Jewish isolationism after this war.

Introduction to "Sabbath Services for the Modern Synagogue"*

By the Editorial Committee**

ON presenting this revised prayer book, we wish to indicate what impelled us to undertake its preparation. We are well aware that great numbers of our people are attached to the traditional prayer book by sentiments of deep and sincere piety and deplore any deviation from its time-honored text. In their opinion such deviation impairs the spiritual unity of the Jewish people and the continuity of its sacred tradition. We too are eager to preserve the Jewish worshiper's sense of identity with Israel and to maintain the common memories and the feeling of a common destiny which the services of the traditional synagogue have always fostered. But due regard must be paid to certain other considerations besides the unity of Israel and the continuity of its spiritual tradition. Otherwise, Jewish worship is in danger of disintegrating and Israel's spiritual heritage of being dissipated.

Many modern Jews have lost, or all but lost, their sense of need for worship and prayer. They rarely attend religious services, and even when they do, their participation is perfunctory. The motions survive; the emotions have fled. The lips move, but the heart is unmoved. Unless this apathy to synagogue services is counteracted, it will spell the end of worship among Jews; and the end of worship means the decay of all spiritual values, and the vulgarization of human life. Since the traditional service has not sufficed to preserve the spirit of worship among Jews, we have found it necessary to explore the possibility of new forms of Jewish liturgical expression. To be sure, this need has been recognized for over a century, and various attempts have been made to satisfy it. All such attempts have been worthy efforts to revitalize Jewish worship. But we have felt that, by reason of their theology and conception of the Jewish people, they have failed to rekindle in the Jew the spirit of worship.

In order to awaken again in the heart of the Jew the desire to worship, we have reckoned with the changes in thought which call for a restatement of what is meant by experiencing the reality of God and with the changes in life which call for a new affirmation of what is meant by identifying ourselves with Israel.

What Is Meant by Experiencing the Reality of God

In order to participate in genuine prayer, the worshiper must, of course, believe in God. But more, he must be ever seeking a clear conception of God, one which would help him to sense the reality of God vividly, as an intense personal experience. Our ancestors possessed such a sense of the reality of God, and could, without hestitation, say with the Psalmist, "I set the Lord before me continually." The modern Jew, however, is disturbed by the current conception of nature. Nature is generally viewed as blind, mechanical and unresponsive to man's prayers. This view of nature leaves in his mind

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no room for God or for worship. Therefore it is necessary for the modern Jew to strive to formulate his idea of God in terms which can serve to inspire him with faith and courage, and which at the same time conform to his knowledge of the world. Just how each Jew will conceive God will vary according to temperament and outlook. For purposes of common worship, however, it is essential to arrive at an idea of God, broad enough to bridge the differences in individual outlook and capable of resolving the inner conflicts which paralyze the impulse to pray. The following idea of God may serve as the basis of a common faith for the Jews of our day:

Reality—the sum of all that exists—should not be regarded as entirely subject to forces operating mechanically. Such forces exist. Science has identified them for us and justified our confidence that they apply universally and without exception. We believe in natural law. But natural law does not account for everything. We know, for example, that, as persons, we are more than bodies acting like mechanical robots. Although everything that we think, feel or do takes place through the instrumentality of our bodies and in conformity with physiological law, yet these do not explain to us what we are. They tell us nothing of what life means for us, of our yearnings, our desires, our hopes and fears, our loves and hates. So too the world about us cannot be wholly explained in terms of nature. There is a universal spirit which transcends and uses nature in some such way as the human spirit transcends and uses the bodily organs of men. Science which concerns itself with nature's laws answers only the question: How? It does not answer the question: Why? It cannot tell us to what end or purpose we should direct our lives. The answer to that question, or rather the very question itself, implies a Power both in and beyond nature which moves men to seek value and meaning in life. That Power is God.

We cannot afford to live merely for the passing moment, not even for ends wholly contained within the brief human life-span; we must live for ends, only partially envisaged, that link us with the life of all mankind, and, beyond that, with the life of the universe, with God. Human life has worth only when its interests extend beyond the service of self. Only then do we feel that we are fulfilling our destiny as human beings and find joy in that fulfillment. Only by serving God can we achieve salvation.

Each of us should learn to think of himself as though he were a cell in some living organism—which, in a sense, he actually is—in his relation to the universe or cosmos. What we think of as a coherent universe or cosmos is more than nature; it is nature with a soul. That soul is God. As each cell in the body depends for its health and proper functioning upon the living body, so each of us depends upon God. Were each cell in us capable of being aware of its dependence upon the whole of us and were it to seek to express that awareness, such expression would for it constitute worship. Each time we hail and glorify the "Thou" in "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe," we enter, in however infinitesimal a degree, into communion with the spirit that maintains the unity of life and directs that unity toward our salvation. Such communion should normally elevate our will to God's will. Our will is to make the most of life; God's will is that we utilize all of life's possibilities for our salvation. This is the nearest we can get to translating the belief in God into living experience.

To God, the source of our will-to-salvation, we must turn periodically in appreciation and gratitude for all the

gifts of life, for the heritage of habits, traditions, standards and ideals, and for the accumulated wealth of tools and skills to which we are heir and by means of which we can carry further the process of universal growth and happiness. To this same source of our will-to-salvation we must turn periodically to ward off the disheartenment and the frustration at the seemingly insuperable difficulties which impede the achievement of universal growth and happiness. If we are to have faith in man and man's future, if we are to have the indomitable courage, we need to meet the onset of the evil doers, if we are to be confident that the sacrifices made in behalf of a better world order are not in vain, then we must be in active communion with God of whom our best self, our selfless urge to make the most of life, is a minute but real emanation. To achieve that communion is the object of worship and prayer.

What Is Mean by Identifying Ourselves With Israel

With the advent of the Jewish emancipation, the Jewish people has become an integral part of the body politic of numerous nations. This has changed not only the political but also the spiritual status of Jewry. Since the prayers imply self-identification with the collective being of the Jewish people and its spiritual aims, it is essential that the worshiper have a definite idea of what such self-identification involves. There are likely to be differing versions of the collective status of the Jews but in one basic assumption modern-minded Jews are certain to agree: that the Jews today do not constitute a divinely chosen nation in the sense that the history of mankind revolves about them.

It was possible for our fathers to hold such an Israel-centered view of history at a time when all the surrounding nations were idolaters and polytheists. That view expressed the intensity of our ancestors' experience of God and their awareness that their own people was the only one which acknowledged its responsibility as a nation to the God of all mankind. We too should, in our day, dedicate Jewish communal life to experiencing the reality of God and to serving Him. But every other people can and should do the same. In justice to our fellow-citizens of other faiths, we may not claim any inherent superiority of temporal or religious status. Our conception of our role in history should be a more modest one. We aspire to make our own distinctive contribution as a people to the enhancement of human life while acknowledging the equal right and obligation of other peoples and communities to make theirs.

When we speak of identifying ourselves with Israel, we therefore mean becoming vividly aware of being members of the Jewish people, sensing our kinship with it, feeling that we have a personal share in its history and destiny. We mean recognizing the unity of Israel, past, present and future, in all parts of the world. We mean understanding Israel's hopes and aspirations, and making them our very own. We mean "accepting the Torah," the spiritual heritage of Israel. Communal worship should be the occasion for thus immersing ourselves in the living reality of *kelal yisrael*, the community of Israel.

But, as indicated above, the desire to worship will not be reawakened unless we reinterpret Israel in dynamic terms. We must recognize that Judaism and the Jewish people have evolved, and are evolving, that tradition never achieves finality, that to deprecate all change is to stunt growth. It is with a living Israel that we seek to identify ourselves, an Israel with a land, a language and a culture, an Israel that ever remakes itself in the light of changing

conditions and needs. This does not necessarily require the abandonment of Israel's past. On the contrary, the prayer book is capable of effecting that kind of self-identification which can utilize, for inspiration and edification, the cultural creations of every age, so long as it also makes us aware of the evolutionary character of our civilization.

In order that this prayer book should help the worshiper to identify himself with the Jewish people, almost all of the prayers appear in the Hebrew language. Jewish worship should, as far as possible, be carried on in Hebrew. It must, however, be a Hebrew that is understood and appreciated, and not one that is repeated by rote. So long as the meaning of the Hebrew prayer is not understood, it is better to recite it in English, for nothing can be worse than using words as a kind of magic formula. But the aim should be to learn to be at home in the use of the Hebrew text of the prayers. Throughout the book, with only a few minor exceptions, the Hebrew version of every prayer and reading will be found.

Another means of Jewish self-identification is Palestine. The immemorial hope of the Jewish people to rebuild its ancient homeland is reflected throughout the text. But in addition, much attention is given to the great contemporary enterprise of rebuilding Eretz Yisrael, as the most significant common effort of Israel to realize its ideals in the modern world. The faith, the courage, the vision and the strength of a resurgent Jewish spirit are articulated in those prayers and readings which touch upon the Zionist striving. Perhaps no other single cause is as potent as this to kindle the spark of Jewish identity.

Still another means towards the same end is the rich cultural heritage of Israel. Intimate contact with that heritage spans the centuries and the vast distances that separate the modern Jew from the generations that preceded him. To establish such contact there have been brought together in this text the words of Jewish prophet and sage, philosopher and ethical teacher, poet and mystic from many periods and many lands. Behind the superficial differences of vocabulary and idiom from those of our day, we find an unchanging and constant impulse—product of an unchanging human nature and a constant need to find salvation—to discover the worthwhileness of life, to uncover the abiding amidst the transitory, the true values in the welter of human experience. The common language of the heart causes these words to endure and to strike responsive chords in us. Thus Israel becomes one in time.

Modification of Traditional Doctrine

In order to retain the continuity of Judaism and, at the same time, to satisfy the spiritual demands of our day, it is necessary to make changes in the content of the prayer book. The principles underlying the text as formulated in this book are the following:

To preserve the authority of Jewish tradition, it is necessary to retain the classical framework of the service and to adhere to the fundamental teachings of that tradition concerning God, man and the world. However, ideas or beliefs in conflict with what have come to be regarded as factually or ethically true should be eliminated.

Some have attempted to obviate the need for changes in the text of the prayers by reading into it meanings completely at variance with what it meant to those who framed them. Such practice is fraught with danger. To smuggle those new meanings into the translation of the text is to violate the principle of forthrightness. To assume that the average worshiper will arrive at them of his

own accord is to expect the unattainable. Our prayers must meet the needs of simple and literal-minded people, even of the young and immature. We dare not therefore take the chance of conveying meanings which do not conform with the best in our religious thinking and feeling. Not that prayers need be prosaic in their literalness, but their figures of speech must have clear and true meanings. People expect a Jewish prayer book to express what a Jew should believe about God, Israel and the Torah, and about the meaning of human life and the destiny of mankind. We must not disappoint them in that expectation. But, unless we eliminate from the traditional text statements of beliefs that are untenable and of desires which we do not or should not cherish, we mislead the simple and alienate the sophisticated. The simple will accept the false with the true, to the detriment of their spiritual growth. The sophisticated will feel that a Jewish service has little value for people of modern mentality. Not reinterpretation but revision of the traditional text is necessary, if our services are to afford us a religious experience similar to that which our fathers found in communal worship.

In keeping with the foregoing, the text of the traditional prayers has been modified to bring it in line with the following changes in traditional doctrine:

The Doctrine of the Chosen People:

While at one time the Jewish people may have been justified in believing that, by virtue of its divinely revealed Torah, it was the sole possessor of God's expressed will, that belief is no longer tenable. To be sure, the doctrine of the Chosen People was never intended to grant privileges, only to impose responsibilities. Nevertheless, the traditional text is so worded as to imply invidious comparisons between Israel and the other nations. Such comparisons are unseemly in our time. The present text exhorts Israel to live up to the highest potentialities of its own being, but avoids comparisons with the achievements or potentialities of other groups.

The Doctrine of the Revelation of the Torah to Moses and Israel by God at Mount Sinai:

Tradition affirms that God supernaturally revealed the Torah, in its present text, to Moses on Mount Sinai. But the critical analysis of the text by modern scholars and the scientific outlook on history render this belief no longer tenable. We now know that the Torah is a human document recording the experience of our people in its quest for God during the formative period of its history. Its sacredness for us lies not in the thought that God revealed the Torah to Israel, but in the fact that the Torah has, in every successive generation, revealed God to Israel. It can still reveal God to us. Though we no longer assume that every word in the text is literally or even figuratively true, the reading of the Torah enables us to relive in imagination, the experiences of our fathers in seeking to make life conform to the will of God, as they understood it. We thus identify ourselves with that purpose and are inspired to seek a religious interpretation, not only of our past history as a people but also of our contemprary experiences. And those who seek God find Him. Our discovery of religious truth is God's revelation to us. The study of Torah in this spirit is properly the central act of worship. It is, moreover, indispensable to our survival and growth as a people. The Torah so conceived is indeed a "tree of life" and serves to plant everlasting life within us. But it cannot serve this purpose as long as the synagogue bases its authority on the dogma of supernatural revelation which the modern mind rejects. Hence, the present text has eliminated all affirmations of the supernatural revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Doctrine of the Personal Messiah:

Modern-minded Jews no longer look forward to the advent of a personal Messiah, who, by supernatural intervention, will redeem Israel from exile, and usher in an era of universal justice and peace. Certainly, there is still every reason to believe, as our ancestors did, that the Golden Age of mankind lies in the future, that history is morally determined, that the Kingdom of God can and will be attained in time, and that, without the aid of the divine forces in the universe, such a consummation of mankind's career will never come about. But we must now think in terms of universal redemption through the struggles, hopes, vision and will of all good men. Our prayer must henceforth be that Israel may have its share in the universal effort to bring about a world of freedom, justice and peace.

While the prayer for the restoration of Israel's national home is retained and even elaborated, there remains the hope that those Jews who prefer to make the lands of their nativity their permanent homes may be permitted to do so in peace and freedom.

The Doctrine of the Restoration of the Sacrificial Cult:

The institution of animal sacrifice was, in ancient times, the accepted mode of worship, and for centuries Jews prayed for the opportunity to reinstate that mode of worship in a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. For the prayers which express that hope, the present text substitutes a prayer that we may learn to make sacrifices of our means and energies in behalf of worthy causes, and that a restored Palestine may once again contribute to our knowledge of how to serve God.

Since the distinction between *Kohen, Levi* and *Israelite* has always been associated with their respective functions in the Temple cult, these distinctions are no longer cogent, and no attempt is made in the text to encourage their prepetuation.

The Doctrine of Retribution through Impersonal Nature:

Our ancestors believed that obedience to the moral and ritual laws of the Torah resulted in favorable rainfalls; and that disobedience caused the rain to be withheld. This was undoubtedly an aspect of their intuition that the laws of the Torah were as integral to the structure of the universe as the laws of nature, and that both kinds of law were interwoven in the destinies of men. To the extent that obedience to the moral law spells happiness and peace for mankind, and disobedience spells disaster and war, that intuition was correct. But that the very rainfall is affected we know is not true. The present text, therefore, is so modified as to emphasize the ever timely truth that the material prosperity and well-being of society are conditional on its conforming to the divine law of justice and righteousness.

The Doctrine of Resurrection:

Men and women brought up in the atmosphere of modern science no longer accept the doctrine that there will be a universal awakening of the dead and a resumption of physical life by each individual. To equate that doctrine with belief in the immortality of the soul is to read into the text a meaning which the words do not express. That the soul is immortal in the sense that death cannot defeat it, that the human spirit, in cleaving to God, transcends the brief span of the individual life and shares in the eternity of the Divine Life can and should be expressed in our prayers. But we do not need, for this purpose, to have recourse to reading a forced symbolism into the affirmation of the traditional belief in resurrection. This prayer book, therefore, both omits the references to the bodily resurrection and adds affirmations of im-

mortality in keeping with what modern-minded men can truly believe.

The revision of the traditional prayers to conform to those changes of doctrine should advance the major purposes of this prayer book. That revision should help it to reveal to the worshiper the God who always stands at the door of his heart waiting, as it were, to be admitted. And it should help to set the current of Israel's life coursing through the worshiper's being, to testify before him to the ever living truth of what Israel has learned concerning man's task on earth.

The Proper Use of the Prayer Book

Success in the achievement of the purposes outlined above requires that both rabbi and congregation study how to make the best use of this prayer book.

Certain parts of the service, suggested by larger type, should be read every Sabbath. But the remaining material should not be chosen at random. Each service should be planned by the rabbi, as a program is planned. It should conform to some central theme suggested by the portion of the week, the subject of the rabbi's sermon or a significant current event. Care should be taken to create a balanced service, one that observes a due proportion between the new and the familiar, between music and speech, between silent meditation and oral utterance. Used in that way, the book can help to overcome the tendency to automatism into which public worship is so liable to fall.

In planning the services, the Supplement should prove helpful and, indeed, indispensable. The prayers contained in this section are taken from a large variety of sources. Some of the texts are not new at all, but new only to the prayer book. They are classics of the Jewish religious genius, wasting far too long their inspiration upon the shelves of neglected libraries. Others are the products of the modern Hebrew renaissance. Still others were composed by the editors themselves.

Some of these texts give new and varied expression to the eternal hopes and aspirations of the human spirit. Some articulate new hopes, new aspirations, reflecting ideas peculiar to modern men and women in modern conditions. In all, there are more than enough to assure the refreshment of variety, so essential to an effective service.

As for the congregation, its men and women must get into the spirit of the service, participating to the maximum degree. The service must not become a performance, nor the congregation an audience. As many as possible should learn to read Hebrew, and to join in congregational singing. And in doing so, they should give close and concentrated attention to the meaning of what they are saying or singing. Our sages cautioned against the tendency for a ritual of prayer to deteriorate into a more formality and lose its character of worship: "Let not your prayer become a mere rountine, but a yearning for mercy and grace in God's sight." And applying to worship a favorite principle of theirs, we should conclude that it matters not whether one says many prayers or few, provided that one says them with a mind intent on serving God. To facilitate the recognition of the underlying thought in each prayer, descriptive titles have been provided in this book. Those who intend to use the prayer book should engage beforehand in a careful study of it, so that they may come to the services sensitized to their beauty and meaning.

With these suggestions and explanations, we submit the prayer book entitled *"Sabbath Services for the Modern Synagogue,"* in the hope that it will help to render Jewish communal worship once again a source of inspiration to hope, faith and spiritual purpose.

Reconstructionism as Both a Challenging and Unifying Influence*

By MORDECAI M. KAPLAN**

RECONSTRUCTIONISM assumes the organic unity and peoplehood of Israel. Its program calls for the realization of that unity through an appropriate over-all social structure and through workable types of local organization. Although we Reconstructionists have a specific conception of how the Jewish community should be organized and should function, we have never made the acceptance of our point of view a prerequisite to collaboration with other organizations and individuals.

But Reconstructionism, particularly in its emphasis on the necessity of change in religious theory and practice, is at the present time unacceptable to certain groups within Jewry. Those who regard it with apprehension are frequently reluctant to co-operate with Reconstructionist bodies even for common aims. They fear that, in so doing, they might add to the prestige of Reconstructionism. Thus our will and purpose to cooperate with non-Reconstructionists in the reestablishment of the organic unity of Israel come into conflict with our will and purpose to adjust Judaism creatively to the conditions of modern life.

That is the problem to which we must address ourselves. We must find a method to mitigate, if not completely to obviate, the practical dilemma by which the advancement of one part of our program militates against the achievement of another part. This is not caused by any logical inconsistency between the two aspects of our work. It is caused by the unpreparedness of certain segments of Jewry to recognize the condition on which unity in any democratic society depends. That condition is that unity must mean tolerance of diversity, the transcendance of differences not their abolition. Unity of purpose is necessary, not uniformity of belief or practice.

This is the problem abstractly stated. It becomes concretized when we associate it with the problem of organizing for the implementation of the Reconstructionist viewpoint. The four main needs of Jewish life are: 1) democratic organizational structure, 2) replenishment of the stock of cultural values, 3) the raising of ethical standards and betterment of human relations, and 4) revision of religious beliefs and practices. The question from an organizational angle may, therefore, be stated as follows: Shall we aim at organizing a comprehensive association of all Jews who feel with us the first three needs, without regard to the fourth need? Or shall we limit our efforts to organizing those who are ready to accept our program in its entirety, which reckons with all the four needs, and seek to influence the rest of Jewry only indirectly? Or is there an intermediate course which we might be able to adopt? The Committee on Policy explored a number of alternative propositions that sought an answer to these questions. This report will present not merely the Committee's conclusions, but a summary of the alternatives that it investigated and its reasons for eventually rejecting most of

* Paper read before the Annual Reconstructionist Conference held in New York City on June 30 and July 1, 1944.

** In collaboration with the other members of the Committee on Policy—Samuel Dinin, Ira Eisenstein, Theodore Friedman and Eugene Kohn.

them. In its effort to envisage all the possibilities, the Committee raised the following questions: Through what kind of social entity shall Reconstructionism function—a school of thought, a religious denomination, a religious order, or fellowship? Who shall constitute such a social entity and how shall responsibility for the planning and execution of Reconstructionist work be distributed?

Reconstructionism No Mere School of Thought

Reconstructionism began as an idea, the idea of Judaism as the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people. To disseminate that idea, *The Reconstructionist* magazine was established. In its early years, Reconstructionism may be said to have functioned exclusively as a school of thought. It might conceivably continue so to function. It might disseminate its ideas without assuming any responsibility for their embodiment in Jewish life. It might stand aloof as mentor and critic of contemporary Judaism without grappling with the problem of finding the means for actually achieving that reconstruction of Jewish life which it advocates.

But the very principles of the Reconstructionist philosophy forbid such a policy. If we regarded Judaism itself as a sort of religious philosophy, we might consistently limit ourselves to expounding its ideas. But when we recognize Judaism to be a dynamic civilization and a product of the effort of the Jewish people to live a good, useful and happy life, we cannot, from that standpoint, be content with mere theory. We must endeavor to give direction to the current of Jewish life in accordance with our conception of what it is that can make the survival of the Jewish people possible and worthwhile. We must endeavor to become an effective social and educational force.

But, if practical results are to be our aim, the social entity through which Reconstructionism must function cannot be limited to a group of writers and lecturers. Those desiring to live by the philosophy and program of Reconstructionism must be organized to participate in advancing its aims. To continue functioning solely as a school of thought is inadequate. It would meet the needs of neither of the aspects of our movement referred to. It would not effect the unification of Jewry, the replenishment of the cultural values of Judaism or the betterment of the human relations of Jews; nor would it establish those creative adjustments to a changing world outlook, which the Reconstructionist philosophy calls for.

Reconstructionism No Mere Denomination

An alternative to a school of thought is a religious denomination within Jewry similar to Orthodoxy, Conservatism or Reform. To speak of these as religious denominations does not mean to imply that they represent a perfect Jewish analogue to the various denominations, let us say, within Protestantism. But the term denomination is sufficiently descriptive for our present purposes. It designates a body organized to give effect to a specific religious creed. Reform and Orthodoxy have a fairly clear doctrinal foundation. The creed of Conservatism is not quite so clear, but it has a sufficient basis for being classified as a denomination in its negation of some of the doctrines of Orthodoxy on the one hand and of Reform on the other and its advocacy of a middle-of-the-road position.

All these denominations have a similar form of organization. They are organized in congregations which are united with one another in a loose federation or union. They have their schools for the training of rabbis and teachers, and their rabbinical associations. Recon-

structionism also has definite religious tenets. These are formulated in its platform. Though it has none of the forms of organization characteristic of religious denominations, it could direct its efforts to developing such forms. The Reform movement began by influencing Jews who were discontented with the Orthodox Synagogue to secede and form congregations of their own or to win over their congregations from Orthodoxy. Reconstructionism might proceed in the same way. Many religious Jews are discontented with their Orthodox, Conservative or Reform affiliations and might be induced to take the step of trying to convert their congregations to Reconstructionism or organizing new congregations. Perhaps we are not yet ready for that type of organization but should prepare ourselves for it in the future. As a matter of fact, we even now engage in the kind of activities which, in the past, have been carried on mainly by denominational organizations. We have published and distributed the *New Haggadah* and *Shir Hadash,* and are now preparing for publication a new prayer book for Sabbath services, and a book for Sabbath devotion and edification in the home around the table.

If we were to accept the implications of the denominational status, how would it affect the organization of our movement? How would it meet the problem of reconciling our purpose to reinterpret and revise Jewish tradition with our other purpose, to unite all Jewish groups for common aims?

In the first place, we should have to confine our organizational efforts to congregational groups. Yet frequently it is precisely among those whom the synagogue has alienated by its intransigent traditionalism or its neglect of the secular interests of Jewry that the principles of Reconstructionism strike a responsive chord. All these denominations assume Judaism and Jewish religion to be not only coextensive but identical. If we adopted the denominational pattern, we should have to neglect and thus alienate a large and active element in Jewry which we, with our approach to Judaism, are in a position to guide to more intensive and more fruitful Jewish endeavor.

Of the undertaking to give Reconstructionism denominational form and status we must therefore conclude that its disadvantages exceed its advantages.

Reconstructionism No Mere Religious Order

Another type of social entity through which Reconstructionism might function is a sort of fraternal order or fellowship characterized by a specific religious purpose. The Order B'nai B'rith, for example, originated largely in response to the need for transcending denominational loyalties in the interest of Jewish communal unity for social and philanthropic purposes. It made its influence felt in a net-work of Jewish activities that cut across the dividing ideologies and denominational loyalties of Jewry. It has, in the course of its progress, continued to find worthy and important causes to which it could rally Jews without reference to denominational patterns. Why could not an association of Reconstructionists act similarly? Could we not, while retaining our own platform, function as a religious fellowship. Such a fellowship might include among its members Jews of all the various religious denominations and also adherents of Jewish secularist organizations. No attempt need be made to draw these persons away from their present affiliations or to persuade them to change the programs of the organizations with which they are affiliated. Nevertheless, by being brought into contact with one another and indoctrinated

with the principles of Reconstructionism, they would eventually, without organized direction, call attention to those principles. Thus Reconstructionism would indirectly influence the organizations to which they belong.

Such a fellowship would be similar in ultimate intent and purpose to the Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship as we have conceived it until now. Its members would be committed to the Reconstructionist point of view, and it would endeavor to guide them in living their Jewish life in accord with the principles of Reconstructionism. But in one respect it would have to be different. Since the Fellowship would be conceived as the total organized force behind the Reconstructionist idea, it would have to be more inclusive than at present. There are many persons who, while convinced of Reconstructionism, do not find it possible to assume all the personal commitments which are now required as a prerequisite for membership in the Fellowship. For, at present, there are many members of the Reconstructionist Foundation, who are not in a position to pledge, for example, regular attendance at meetings of a Fellowship Chapter. Nevertheless, they consider themselves spiritually identified with the cause of Reconstructionism.

However, if membership in the Reconstructionist Fellowship did not require a definite personal commitment but only acquiescence in a theory, a main method of implementing Reconstructionism would thereby be abandoned. A fellowship limited to enthusiastic devotees of the movement, its *hasidim* and missionaries, is an instrument of great potential power. Only such a fellowship can generate the dynamic force necessary to overcome inertia, timidity and indifference, as well as misunderstanding and misrepresentation. We can ill afford to lose so effective an instrument. Moreover, it is doubtful whether, even as a religious order or fellowship, we could reassure those who oppose Reconstructionism that they can with safety cooperate with us in establishing communal solidarity and in promoting Jewish cultural creativity and better human relations. As long as we take seriously our desire to reconstruct Jewish life, we shall be viewed askance by traditionalists. It is doubtful whether the fellowship could spread among members of denominations officially antagonistic to our philosophy.

We are, therefore, back at our starting point except that, having explored the different alternatives that seemed open to us, we can see more clearly that the difficulty of pursuing all our four objectives at the same time is an inherent one. No new definition of what constitutes Reconstructionism and no new form of organization wholly obviates the difficulty.

Reconstructionism a Dynamic Movement

The truth is that Reconstructionism is a manifestation of Jewish life which cannot be confined to one specific type of organization. It is not a static philosophy but a dynamic way of life. Its dynamism would be hampered by a premature crystalization of its forms. Reconstructionism is essentially a movement. It is not a movement *in* Judaism but rather a movement *of* Judaism, an attempt to forecast the direction in which Judaism must evolve and to faciltate that evolution. Whatever social entities or organizational forms the movement may develop and utilize, it will always transcend them. It must, therefore, guard against imposing a rigid organizational pattern on its expression.

The analogy wth the Zionist movement will illustrate the need of this flex-

ibility. Zionism, too, is dynamic. Although not as comprehensive as Reconstructionism, in that it limits itself to one phase of Judaism, it too transcends its organized forms and creates its own organization in response to emergent needs. In the beginning it represented a small minority of Jews and was accused of divisiveness. But its leaders knew that, potentially, it was a great force for unity and trusted to the logic of events to demonstrate that this belief of theirs was correct. They knew that many more people were Zionists at heart than were included in Zionist organizations. As the movement proceeded in its work, it kept constantly invading new areas of Jewish life, attracting new Jewish forces to it, creating new Jewish organization—parties, fiscal and administrative agencies, women's associations, youth movements, special functional groups of every description. At no time was a limit set to the organizational forms which the movement was to take. On the contrary, it kept on improvising new forms.

And the same course should be followed by Reconstructionism. It began with an idea. The idea took possession of a small group of people who wanted to disseminate it, particularly among rabbis, Jewish educators and social workers. Thus its first organ was created, the Editorial Board of *The Reconstructionist* magazine, under the sponsorship of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism. The magazine won followers. It became a rallying point for Jews who yearned for a more creative Judaism. They were brought together in conference and began to make demands for more effective steps in reconstructing Jewish life. They wanted books, syllabi, study groups, the encouragement of the arts, community organization, the raising of ethical standards. The Editorial Board recognized these needs but could not meet them. Money was needed and laymen had to be interested in providing for these wants. Thus the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation came into being as the fiscal and administrative organ of the movement. But the Foundation meets only once a year, and its Board of Directors is virtually limited to New York and its vicinity. To advance our movement, we needed groups of convinced and devoted adherents in every community who could give effect locally to our purposes. We turned naturally to those groups that had already been studying Reconstructionism and sought to unite them in a nation-wide Reconstructionist Fellowship.

The Fellowship is the *latest* organ of our movement. But it is not the *last*. We cannot forecast what other forms Reconstructionism will assume, but form must follow function, not precede it. When we find a job has to be done, we—that is all who recognize the validity and cogency of Reconstructionism—will create the instrument for doing it.

Resolving Our Organizational Dilemma

What then becomes of our practical dilemma? How can we advance the cause of Jewish unity without surrendering our freedom of conscience? How can we further our distinctive viewpoint without abandoning the effort to unite all Jewry? It is one of those dilemmas that can be resolved only by action over a long period of time. *One thing is clear, that if there is to be any unity in Israel, it can be achieved only through the democratic principle of diversity in unity.* Only those who have not yet come to the realization of this truth, who insist on their own particular understanding of Judaism as the sole basis of unity, find it difficult to cooperate with us. But they are cherishing an illusion if they think that unity can be achieved through imposing uniformity. Were we, therefore, not to assert our right to advocate those changes in Jewish life

which we deem important, we would be sinning not only against our conscience with respect to those changes, but against the very principle on which all hope of democratic unity rests.

It is our faith that, in the course of time, and not necessarily of a very long time, the need for communal unity on the basis proposed by us will be forced on Jewry by the logic of events. We believe that we can, by our literature and our personal influence, help drive home this need. We are confident that other organizations will take up the same cause, and we are not too much concerned with whether they credit us with having influenced their action or not.

Meanwhile we shall not permit ourselves to forget that many Jews want to be loyal and want Judaism to help them make the most of their lives, but cannot subscribe either to Orthodox Judaism or to any denominational alternative. They are not able to identify Judaism either with a religious cult or with a secularist form of nationalism. These people are Reconstructionists at heart, though many of them may not even have heard the name. To make them aware of the possibilities of Jewish life, to show them how it can be lived to advantage in America without surrendering intellectual integrity, aesthetic taste or moral conviction, is mainly the task of the Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship. That Fellowship is and should remain an organization of men and women who feel a definite consecration to their task.

The present high standard of admission to the Fellowship should be retained. Every chapter must be a center of creative activity. It should endeavor to keep in touch with those who acquiesce in whole or in part in the theory of Reconstructionism, but are not yet prepared to let it transform their habits and direct their lives. Every member of the Foundation, every reader of our pamphlets, books and magazine, every user of our prayer books and other devotional literature that we publish is a potential Reconstructionist. The Chapters of the Fellowship should cultivate the Jewish interests of all such persons. Eventually, all who regard themselves as Reconstructionists without any reservations or qualifications will naturally join the Fellowship and the term Reconstructionist and member of the Reconstructionist Fellowship will then be synonymous. That is a goal for which we should strive. But this goal need not prevent us from admitting into the Foundation people who are not members of the Fellowship, but who are willing to sponsor Reconstructionist activities. Nor need this goal prevent us from creating such other forms of organization as circumstances may from time to time require. It is conceivable that, although we do not pattern our organization after any of the existing Jewish religious denominations, congregations may wish to commit themselves to Reconstructionism and to unite for furthering its purposes through the synagogue. If that time comes, there is no reason why a union of Reconstructionist congregations may not become an organ of the Reconstructionist movement. But the movement will not be prevented by such a development from also functioning through other organizations not of a congregational character.

We should, therefore, recognize in Reconstructionism a movement that is not to be confined to any one kind of social entity or organizational form, such as a school of thought, religious denomination, religious order or fellowship. We should keep its organizational forms flexible enough to respond to the needs and opportunities which result from its own dynamism. In this way we can best serve both the unifying purposes of Reconstructionism and its purpose of adjusting Judaism to changing conditions of life.

DISCUSSION OF THE FOREGOING PAPER

Rabbi Maxwell Farber, as chairman of the discussion, stated that, in view of the misinformation which prevailed concerning the Reconstructionist movement it was necessary to emphasize the fact that Reconstructionism was not intended to authorize laxity of observance among practicing Jews, but rather to bring Jews to whom Judaism is meaningless closer to Jewish tradition.

Rabbi Jack Cohen of Cleveland, in discussing the membership pledge of the Fellowship, said that, in his opinion, the pledge contained nothing with which any Conservative Jew could not comply. In answering Rabbi Cohen, Dr. Eisenstein reiterated that Reconstructionism differs from Conservatism in being a movement not confined to any one organizational form. Through its own dynamics it is flexible enough to function everywhere for the purpose of unifying Jewry and adjusting it to changing conditions. Reconstructionists take "unity in diversity" very seriously. We are, therefore, satisfied to find that Conservatives can, in good conscience, adopt our pledge. We are Jews first and Reconstructionists secondarily. But our interpretation of the requirements of the pledge will be influenced by our principles as formulated in our platform, and these differentiate our position from Conservatism.

In answer to two questions dealing with the desire of Jews to escape from Judaism, one posed by Dr. Max Wiener and the other by Rabbi Max Weine of Camden, N. J., Dr. Kaplan pointed out that this problem should have agitated the thinking of Jews 150 years ago when emancipation first dawned. Instead of that, our spiritual leaders devoted themselves to a study of the past hoping to find in that past guidance for our present problems. Their services in that connection were invaluable. But a study of the past alone is not an adequate basis for an adjustment to the conditions of modern life. Those conditions, too, require study. Moreover, organized action as well as study is necessary. It is up to us to initiate a line of activity which would win some of our thoughtful men and women for an examination of the factors involved in the lure of escapism.

Mr. Sidney Jacobs asked how the Fellowship could function effectively if it were only a minority in a congregation. Would the group not wish to have its point of view prevail without waiting to convert all the members? In answer, Dr. Eisenstein said that the matter of forming Reconstructionist Congregations or associations of Reconstructionists was not ruled out. What we were trying to avoid is falling into a narrow denominational pattern.

Rabbi Emanuel Green of Worcester pointed out that we had been making our approach to adults. Why, he asked, do we not write a series of text books for the youth and give those text books the Reconstructionist viewpoint. Dr. Dinin thought that this was not feasible unless a group of Reconstructionist schools existed which demanded such text books.

Dr. Eric Lowenthal of Leominster, Mass., questioned the frankness of the Fellowship membership pledge. In his opinion it is evasive in that it does not state the Reconstructionist attitude to theology. If Reconstructionism believes that the Orthodox conception is dangerous for modern Jewry, then that formulation should be fought openly, and the membership pledge should so state. In his reply, Dr. Kaplan called attention to the fact that the pledge includes a statement of acquiescence in the principles of Reconstructionism. These principles are clearly and explicitly stated in our platform. But Reconstructionists do not wish to be manouvered into a position of combating Orthodoxy or any other denomination. Reconstructionists differ from the traditional view but do not regard Reconstructionism as a movement to further a particular theology. We are Jews before we are theologians. Those who subscribe to the membership pledge do so after having studied the Reconstructionist program and philosophy, and are familiar with its attitude to theology.

Rabbi Trepp of Newport News, Va., thought that we could get ahead faster if we used methods of teaching more adapted to reach the masses, as do the Communists, rather than concentrate on the organization of Reconstructionist groups limited in membership. Dr. Kaplan explained that it is impossible to formulate a uniform method for disseminating ideas. Reconstructionism is a movement to change people's minds and cannot avail itself of propaganda by slogans or appeal to economic interests, as does Communism. But even Communism itself did not treat the public in the mass; it was spread by cells. In its own way, Reconstructionism is as revolutionary as Communism, and, at present, it seems to function best through groups which might be likened to cells.

Rabbi Eugene Greenfield of Portsmouth, Va., agreed that the masses must be attracted to Reconstructionism but asked what promise it held out for them. Formerly, Jews acted through promises of Heaven or out of fear of punishment. Is mere Jewish survival sufficient reward? Dr. Kaplan replied that we have indicated the four areas of Jewish life which must be cultivated to make Judaism worth-

Book Notes

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, by David Jacobson, Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, O.

EVER since the birth of the science of Judaism in Germany a century and a quarter ago, one of its most significant weaknesses has been the dearth of original Jewish scholarship in the field of the Bible.

A group of young Biblical scholars has recently arisen which promises to relieve this dearth. Their number has been augmented by David Jacobson, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College and Cambridge University, whose doctoral dissertation, in amplified form, has been published under the above title. In nine readable well-written chapters, amply documented by references to scientific literature, Dr. Jacobson treats of the various aspects of Hebrew life, marriage and the family, the place of the individual, the dead, totemism, blood, sacrifice, blood vengeance, the levirate and circumcision.

While the author naturally adopts the critical position throughout, his sense of balance and excellent judgment prevent him from falling prey to the new and equally deadening orthodoxy of hypercriticism, which prefers radical hypotheses and treats Biblical sources with skepticism. Thus, after a careful weighing of the evidence pro and con, Jacobson rejects as unproved such theories as a primitive matriarchate in Israel (p. 28), marriage by capture (p. 38), the junior right of inheritance p. (96), and the existence of totemism among the Semites (pp. 202 ff).

Countless features of the social background are clearly and systematically described. We may call attention to the presentation of the various motives entering into blood vengeance (p. 275 ff.), or the description of the phases of the levirate rite, wherein he foliows Morgenstern, and, to a lesser extent, Burrows.

The fairness and completeness with which the salient facts are set forth on each issue are admirable. The value of the book is enhanced by copious references, a bibliography and a useful index.

The critical comments that follow testify to the excellence of the work as a whole and to its usefulness for the reader or student who wishes to comprehend the Bible in terms of its background.

One general observation is in order. The author would have enhanced the value of his presentation for the understanding of Biblical life, if he had distinguished between the remnants of primitive Semitic belief and ritual unconsciously retained in Hebrew religion, and the conscious reaction of the legislators and the prophets who opposed or modified many of these features. A case in point is the substitu-

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while. The Jews who feel adjusted, whether as convinced Orthodox or convinced assimilationists, are outside our scope. But to those who are unhappy but would like to be happy as Jews, we say: You are unhappy, because you have no status? Then you can work in the area of community and help define your status. If you believe Jewish life is dull, void, empty, then we say: Create cultural content to enrich Jewish life. Are you troubled by the low standard of ethics? Then work with us to improve it and let it be known that the name of Jew stands for something fine. You cannot accept the traditional religious approach? Then come to us, because we are not committed to one interpretation and we understand your problem. By pursuing these objectives, any Jew in whom the will to live as a Jew persists, however feebly, can find happiness in his Judaism.

tion of the redemption of the first-born for child-sacrifice, which was widespread in ancient religion.

In such work there is room for difference of opinion on details. It is by no means certain that *elohim* in Ex. 21:6; 22:7 is a family god (p. 13). His reconstruction of the stages of the belief in Sheol (p. 151 ff.) is problematical. Similarly it is unnecessary to assume that Ruth 4:11b-12a and 17b-22 are a late insertion and represent a phase in the development of *yibbum* distinct from the rest of the book. Throughout "Ruth," property is the dominant consideration in the levirate, and the duty of begetting a son to bear the dead man's name is already fictive and secondary.

Jacobson follows the accepted view that the individual plays a small role in the life of the tribe and the nation (p. 124), but Rankin has supplied a much needed corrective against the tendency to overlook the role of the individual in Biblical religion and thought even before Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It is highly doubtful whether such passages as Gen. 34:30; 37:27 and Judges 9:56 imply that murder outside the family circle was not adjudged a crime. Even the oldest Biblical writers regard murder as sinful *per se*. On page 25, Naaman is an error for Micah.

Jacobson follows critical opinion in rejecting in toto the historicity of the *edah* or "congregation" (p. 274) described in the Bible as a judicial body. We hope shortly to demonstrate that here, too, the Priestly writer has been unjustly suspected by modern scholars and that he preserves the record of an ancient democratic institution, for which evidence elsewhere in the Semitic world is available. So too, the fact that the East Jordan cities of refuge no longer existed in post-exilic times is evidence of the antiquity of the tradition, not of its falsity.

At a few points, recent research has escaped Dr. Jacobson's notice. In Hos. 3:2, the verb is not *karah,* but *nakar,* as Ibn Ezra noted correctly long ago, and it *does* mean "purchase" (p. 42), both the verb and its meaning being attested in Ugaritic sources. The famous prohibition of "seething a kid in its mother's milk" in the Bible is due, not to a "horror of incest" (p. 68), but to the fact that it was a rite in the fertility cult, as we have also learned from Ugaritic literature. Maimonides, interestingly enough, suggested that it was a pagan rite long ago.

The Jewish custom of throwing a bit of turf behind one, when leaving the cemetery, is explained by Jacobson as similar to the *matzevah,* which he regards as a way of keeping the dead in their places. Even if this be true of stones, which is uncertain, it is not likely to be true of grass which the wind carries away. The late B. A. Elzas once compared this practice to Job 2:12, where the Friends throw dust over their heads heavenwards when they see Job in his disfigurement. He explained both rites as acts designed to ward off evil arising from contact with the dead or the leprous Job.

The "gods" in Ps. 81:1, are not kings, as Jacobson hesitantly suggests but are almost surely a reference to the divine beings among whom Adam was numbered before his Fall (cf. AJSL, 1936, p. 91 ff.).

The author accepts the popular rendering of the famous passage in Proverbs 20:27: "The soul of man is the lamp of God," but it is almost certainly incorrect, as the parallelism makes clear. *Ner* is a verb, not a noun, and the verse is to be rendered somewhat as follows: "God searches out the soul of man, He seeks out all the inward parts."

These details serve only to set in bright relief the stimulating and comprehensive character of the work as a whole, on which Dr. Jacobson is to be warmly congratulated. —ROBERT GORDIS